ITE SILENCES

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POEMS
A PLAY
& ~
A TALE

BY

KATHERINE BULL

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White Silences

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Poems
A Play
&
A Tale

By

KATHERINE BULL

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Seeking, we shall find—despairing there shall arise new hopes. Down in the valley we said "We have searched everywhere"—and we had never climbed this peak!

In an unthought place we shall find It.

From THE GREY-GREEN FOREST,
A PROSE-POEM.

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MEMORIAL

In the middle of October, 1918, Katherine Bull, a little girl of fifteen, slipped away into the Great Beyond, leaving this message—written many months before and tucked away among her poems—for a world brought face to face with sorrowing and death:

"You talk to me about dying,
What do you know about dying?
It is not dying you mean . . . . you mean LIFE."

There was no struggle, no anticipation; just a sudden flitting away, like a bird let out of its cage.

Her last two years were spent at boarding school, and filled so full of joyous interest in all the usual activities, that there was great surprise among her friends to find she had long been writing poems like these. "She never talked about such things" they said, and "She didn't *seem* different from the rest of us."

She was perhaps the most concentrated bit of livingness in the entire school, and so when she went quietly away, with hardly any warning whatsoever, there might have been an emptiness experienced, a sense of loss—a sadness that so much joy of life should be removed from sight.

But here the "difference," not always noticeable before, was suddenly apparent: *she was one for whom you could not mourn!* And the wonderful awareness that was hers, deep down under the ordinary current of her life, bloomed out into a sudden radiance and overflowed the hearts of those who were most near to her, leaving no place for ordinary grief. "We never knew that death could be like this" . . . the children said to one another.

There was no thought of any burial, even after the alchemy of fire had wrought its rapid change. Up on the Mountain of her poem—beyond the sign that reads "End of the Road," she planned to build a little house some far-off day—a little house that would look out over the river . . . . . And so—a certain morning before dawn . . . the one who was most-near-of-all to her went up—alone . . . . . and the little handful of star-dust, given to the winds, was scattered lightly on the mountain side.

Always to the point where men write "End of the Road" ——and then beyond! . . . . . She would have none of your limitations.

The poetry began to appear when she was eight years old. Always it was quite spontaneous, and seldom tampered with once it was written down. The early verses here included are chosen from a much larger number which she made into a little manuscript book and dedicated "To my Mother." No one could possibly be more critical of these first attempts than was the child herself, after she had begun to strike her truer gait. She never ceased to enjoy reading them over to us, however, sometimes laughing whole-heartedly at their "childishness," and sometimes commenting very quaintly—but quite impersonally—on their good points and on their bad ones!

She read a great amount of poetry, and the influence of Edward Carpenter particularly is easy to be traced in much that she has done. At times she has quite frankly taken over forms of rhyme or meter that made a strong appeal, and her indebtedness to Lanier is obvious in one instance—to Vachell Lindsay in another. Yet both these poems contain so much that is entirely her own, it seemed a pity to exclude them from her book.

The later poems were the most precious things in her possession, and nearly all of them are given here—the less good with the best—to make their own appeal, and take whatever place belongs to them amid the universal heralding of a New Day already at our gates.

◆ ◆ ◆

High up on the mountain side there blooms to-day a cloud of everlasting flowers—the loveliest gayest little grey-white immortelles. It is as tho the brooding Earth in her great tenderness and mother-love could not forego the customary marking of the spot! And yet—the very mountain seems alive with her, the little strong one who wandered lightly over it so often and so eagerly, and there is no sense of any part peculiarly hers.

For there is an end of graves at hand—in the earth and in our hearts as well. If this were to be the beginning of the end . . . . what more fitting memorial to the little poet of Immortality and Freedom—who made this book for you!

NINA BULL

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DEDICATION

To My Mother

Mother, you sit in the twilight, and
As the twilight deepens, the blackness ripens,
The ocean sways and the ocean quivers,
And breezes glide through the air like rivers,
The sun sinks lower beneath the horizon,
The world is mystic,—the shadows gloomy,
The earth is veiled in a veil of splendor—
A magic veil that comes from the fairies;
Woven and spun—woven and spun
On an elfin loom with elfin network.

O how short is the magical moment!
How precious, how lovely the magical moment!
When the black leaves come and the green leaves go
And color fades from the world of real things—
World of real things—of unreal things.

But, Mother, you love to sit in the twilight,
To watch, as it deepens, the blackness ripen,
The ocean sway and the ocean —— Nay,
I have said it—I will not say it again;
But you must seal my lips with a kiss,
With a kiss, Mother, good-night.

SILENCES

I love
The white silences that you keep.

I do not know who you are . . . . . .
Only your silences hide in my soul.

SONG SPARROW

I heard you, little soul-singer . . . . .
In the sweet pause of the rising morning you wounded me
to life.

To-day you are loved and noted of heaven
And forever you shall be of the Sacred Ones . . . . . .

For it was you that woke the thrill in the deeps of me.

THE OPEN ROAD

Away and away it stretches
Into the distant horizon,
Inviting, and tempting, and luring me
On into Life and Adventure.
Like Time, it has known no beginning
And endless, like God, it is waiting:
While I, that stand awed in the silence,
Am crushed with the love and adoring
That circles me round in deep circles,
And passes and passes and passes
Through all of my innermost being.

Along and along I am running:
(Glad heart, that is throwing me forward!)

Night comes and I sit by the roadside
And gaze at the stars in the midnight;
But long ere the morning awakens
I wake—and am running and running
Over the endless, beginningless:
Over the open road!

TO THE WINGÈD CLOUDS

O clouds, ye heralds of snows and storms,
Ye wings of the world with your wild white forms,
O bear me up on your wavy crests
Your myriad mother's bosoms and breasts;
And dance me out in the universe,
I an infant and ye my nurse;
Feed me the food that the stars consume,
And make me strong in your mother-womb;
Kiss me with lips that have cursed, and sing me
Your sweetest of songs, cuddle me, wring me,
And deep, O deep
Deep down in your downy depths where your songs ye keep,
Sing me asleep!

TO MY HEART

O little heart of mine,
Tell me, why did you prefer to stay in darkness when you saw light?
You saw Love, and still hated:
You saw Knowledge, and sought it not:
You saw Faith, and doubted:
You saw Hope, and despaired:
Joy, and were still miserable.
Why was this, O Heart of mine?
For there came a hole in the veil that was wound about you and kept you in darkness,
A little hole which let through the Light and through which you saw Love, and Knowledge, and Faith, and Hope, and Joy;
But you drew the veil tighter around you and hid the hole in its folds . . . . .
And then, by and by, the hole grew larger—
You looked once more, and saw how sacred it was,
And you called to Light and her companions . . . . .
And lo!
The veil of darkness you had worn changed to the Light you sought:
And the hatred that you had hated became your love of Love:
The Knowledge that you had longed for was born of your ignorance:
And out of the doubt and fear you bore came faith in Faith eternal:
Born of the blackest of your despair came Hope, the Conqueror of Worlds:
And from the depths of your misery issued your wildest Joy in rejoicing.
I know you have blessed the hidden hole in the veil that covered your eyes;
But tell me, O Heart of mine, and Soul of my heart of hearts,
Tell me, why did you hide so long from the Light that blossomed about you?

IF THOU HAST GIVEN THY LIFE

If thou hast given thy life and thy strength and thy power to
attain something—
Not for thyself, but for the world;
If thy vision proclaims it perfect and thou knowest none better;
And if thou shalt live to see this ideal a reality before thee:

Thou shalt not pause to glory in it.
There will be no time for thee to put on thy fine raiment,
Or to feast in the hall and rejoice;
Nor will there even be time for thee to doff thy work clothes.

But thou shalt run on:
Past the feast
And past the merry-makers,
Past everything,
Past all the past,
Yea, even thy ideal which has been realized;
And thou shalt give thy all to a new ideal,
For it shalt thou labor and for it shalt thou drain thy new life.

SEA SONG

I sit high on a rock
The ocean lies low beneath me
And the spray reaches up and sometimes spatters me with a shower of pure pearls,
While the wind blows through my hair and kisses my heart.

The pearls are big;
The waves and the rock are bigger;
And the ocean is bigger still.
But I . . . .
Am littler than the littlest pearl;
I am so little that I long to cast myself from the rock,
I long to lose my great littleness in its great bigness,
To mix my spark of power with its omnipotence,
To feel its vastness, its glory, its limitless life,
To lie in this mass of surging waters and cease breathing—ay, to forsake my breathing body;
I must live its glory and its freedom.
I MUST LIVE!

And perhaps I shall issue forth purified—cleansed,
Perhaps I shall return with all its power merged into mine—one with mine,
And perhaps . . . perhaps the ocean and I will never part—will never be severed,
Perhaps we shall live as One through the ages.
—Perhaps? . . . . No—Surely.

STORM OF SPIRITS

Black trees—black shore-line—white sea—black enfolding edges of a bay
And I, beholding it, inconspicuous sheltered—gazing from far inland.
Beautiful white sky resting on black uplifted horizon
Masses of spirit centered—casting deep shadows, holy, over the water near edges of things—
Then with a slow swiftness black merging into white and white spreading out over all in grey mist.
Grey mist eating deep into everything
And clean white sea things sliding surely up from the sand and vanishing out with swift ease into unknown spaciousness of great freedom.
And when all They have passed out . . . . grey grey torrents of rain consuming all into sorrow and weeping not to be relieved by fire or sobbing but only a slow unintermittant mourning and dismal oblivion of outline.
Even the trees above me are stiff and silent and the utter dimming has stricken me cold and dead.
O that I could have run with Them —— clean also and white merging —— into the Unknown Freedom where light and darkness and all hidden things stand revealed in naked nature.

IF YOU HAVE SAVED A FRIEND'S LIFE

If you have saved a friend's life,
Or done some valorous deed, forgetful of self,
If you have been kind and unselfish and generous
And are tired of doing good,
Desiring to rest and remain in peace:
Remember, it is not what you have done that counts,
But what you are doing.

If you have done a good thing,
Think not that if you do it again it will still be good.
The second time you must do something much harder, much better.
Right and wrong are not determined by the world,
But by each individual.
The best you are able is right.
Other than that is wrong.
And remember, it is not what you have done that counts,
But what you are doing.

If you have sinned, and are weighted down with the memory,
If you punish yourself, and do penance,
Or if you have sustained a great grief
And therefore your life is clouded:
Forget your grief and your sins,
Let them not spoil your whole existence;
The only acceptable penance for wrong, is right.
Remember, it is not what you have done that counts,
But what you are doing.

WORSHIP

There is nothing in all the world that is not fit to be worshipped.

The ocean, mad, free, passionate — it is my God to me.
The trees rocks sand (equally glorious expressions of Nature) they are my God to me.
And the little common things . . . . . the field mouse shining loving stars up thro the grass at me as I pass
Or the water rat peeping shy out of the sewer pipe, and shooting back again at the approach of a stranger . . . .
There is no fear between us. We are all worship to each other.

Behold as I lay by the sea
The waves washed up unto me many things
And the tide slid back underneath the ocean
Leaving a dead fish rotting on the sand.

And as I lay worshipping
There came a voice:
And I knew that there was nothing beautiful in heaven or earth that had not its form from the rot and unloveliness of centuries.

HEAT

Heat heat; sunlight white heat —— all heat
Shadow black languid heat
Each grain of sand scorching deep deep into my body
And sea, cold cold scorching the heat heat scorching cold
All is heat:
Black shadow-heat white sun-heat dry sand-heat wet cold-heat
All heat equal scorching equally great seething heat.
Grass rock tree sand water— One heat . . . . .
Thus the country.

Fever fever
Death death
Men and women stricken in the streets 'neath glare of great walls —— all heat
Dying dying, unclean fever and burning out of hearts
Hot tearless sorrow, the deep city gone mad with a terrible mania
Walls walls snatching the heat white delirious heat
And thick atmosphere — unfit breath for even the swarming diseased flies.
O fever fever
Thus the city.

O wonderful world-heat
Heat of the universe and all that is
Drawn out from the center of things by Unknown Power:
Whom do I worship but thee?
Where a God, an All, supreme, save thee?
Mad essence of all and source in the eyes of the world, destroying . . . . . and beyond eyes, creating
Scorch thou my body; or if need be, consume it in flame
For I will dissolve my identity in pain . . . world-pain . . . heat-pain
And glory in a new creation.

YOU

You
I love you.
I do not love you as I love my unknown gods . . . .

I love you close—
Small and human . . . .
And the great awe of your tenderness.

You are so beautiful
And I love your eyes.
There is a terrible sadness . . . .
Burden of worlds
Singing its tear-heart.

You are so big . . . . . .
And you are so tired
So lonely.
I am so small,
But I am not tired, and so little lonely.
I am of the little aches and hurts
And you are of the ache of worlds:
My little ones so short, so passing.

I am April
But with such joy as April never knew.
But you . . . .
You are time . . . . . .
Wheeling
Great and lonely
Through the worlds . . . . . .
On the way of the lone gods.

LINES

Lingering seas of sunset
Flaming and red,
Bits of my golden sorrow
Burnished and bled.

Woven of misty vagueness
Cloud eagles swoop
Bearing away my sorrow
Into their troop.

WANDERING LIGHTLY

Wandering lightly over the mountains
Running and leaping and passing and flitting
Over and on —— a dance and joy.
Hither I come and thither I go
Night of the Silence —— who can know?
High , low go , go
Leaping chasms
Climbing precipices
Slipping into abysses
Flying up out over
High , low go , go

EVENING PRAYER

"O mighty Mother—in silence receive thy child."

EDWARD CARPENTER.

O mighty Mother—in silence receive thy child—in high silences of night, peaceful and unresisting let me be taken;
And through all the quiet time let my healing be accomplished,
While stars bud and even until the moon yields into the sun.
O mighty Mother,
Make me to-night even as the moon—yield me also into the Sun, that we may arise and go forth together, goldenly glorious.

MORNING PRAYER

I will arise and run out into the day, singing—
Thou Mother shalt look forth out of my eyes and lay blessings on all life.
Wheresoever I go, there shall be always the quiet time, and upon whomsoever I lay my eyes, he shall be blessed forever.
My very breath shall be healing, and always for the strength I give out, there shall return an hundredfold for my own healing.

SONGS OF MY BEING

I

I was not begotten of woman,
Nature was my mother.
I slept in the womb of the ocean,
Yea, Sae* brought me forth.
The rocks cradled me:
The trees fondled me in their arms:
The flowers lent me their smiles for my lips,
Their quietude for my heart.

When I was a child
I gathered pearls from the ocean,
Pieces of gold and silver from the earth,
Pink coral from the coral islands,
And I loved them, because they were pretty.

I ate the berries of the deadly nightshade:
I drank poison out of the serpent's fangs:
A hundred times in the storm the lightning struck across my face:
And who could count the days I have played in the beautiful garden in the bosom of Sae where I was nourished until I came forth perfect?
I have walked through fire,
Yea, stood still in the midst of it and breathed of the life that was in it.
There was an earthquake and mountains fell on me,
But I took wings, and soared up out of the rock.
Yea, I have drunk poison and laughed;
I have stood in fire, nor been burnt;
I have played in the beautiful sea-garden, and have not been drowned;
Rocks have fallen upon me, and I was not crushed.

I sing of the strength of me . . . . . .
It may well seem a miracle to thee—just now—
Yet believe . . . . . and some day thou shalt understand.

**Sae is Old English for Sea.*

SONGS OF MY BEING

II

I am the ruler of my body and soul through my Spirit:
I am lord of all about me:
I make pure that which is filled with impurities:
I wash that which is filthy:
I heal that which is afflicted:
Anger and fear fly before the flame of my breath
Like chaff before the wind:
That which has been evil becomes nothing as I approach:
The stars are my messengers;
The sun and moon are a footstool for my feet;
I sit on the mountains and watch the world go its way below me;
At my right hand is Eternity,
And at my left is Space:
The lightning is the glance of my eye;
The thunder is my voice when I raise it in praise to the skies;
The oceans are my tears, purifying the earth:
Fire is my soul, burning the earth:
Wind is my breath, scattering the earth:
And earthquakes are my words, upheaving it.
I am my master.
I am in God and in all these worlds about me,
And in me are all these.

SPRING

Spring,
I love thee!
It is the beginning, the world re-born
That I love.
And I love it
Because I, too, am re-born.
My body sings, and is beautiful;
Its ugly covering drops off
Even as thy snow departs,
And underneath it is strong and growing.

Spring,
I love thee!
I see thee in the vanishing dirt-laden snow,
I hear thee in the sap whispering inside black tree-trunks,
And I behold thee in green buds through the branches
Ready to burst out and grow when their time comes.
In the waking pools thou art,
And in the ice-bound rivers breaking their thick coverings
into a thousand pieces with glad flowing.
In the sky
The white clouds
I see thee.
In the air
The warm clouds
Thou art.
In the green things growing up through the earth,
In the birds' songs
And in me, also,
Thou art come.
My soul set free
In calm and silent joy
Worshipping thee, as a God.
Thou art a beginning
Re-bearing the earth
Out of great deadness.

I am the regenerating Life;
I, O World, am thy re-birth,
I am thy great beginning.
And I am also that which begins,
That which is re-born
To whom the re-birth comes.

THE STORM

A tearing rush
Tears
A flash
And a crash
A piercing shriek
A gasping cry—
Still tears
Strange lights
Crashes
'Midst flashes
And trees
Bending in the breeze
And standing in tall loneliness against the sky.
Clouds passing by
And stretching forth gray fingers in the air
Weird fantasies and forms
Strange shapes and fair.
The tears still lingering on each trembling leaf
Then pouring down once more
In fiercest torrents.
Again the wind
Maddest
And gladdest
Wildest
And weirdest.
Once more the flash
. . . . And lo! strange miracle
A door is opened;
And then
Nor pause between, there comes that rent, that cry.

Was that door opened then, I wonder,
To greet the Thunder?

A wingèd, solitary singer sails by—
Sails through the clouds
Even as water passes down the wind
And in his song
He seeks to outsing the living leaves
And wins the victory.
And then there bursts
From out ten thousand throats a song
Of fiercest glory.

The tears cease falling.
And yet the web the water weaves
Still covers leaves.
And I
Rush forth to laugh aloud for Life,—
For that I live!

A TINY RED SPIDER

A tiny red spider sliding over a piece
of white paper . . . .
Something laid down over the little
life . . . .
And nothing left but a red smudge on
the paper, no bigger than a pin-head.

I SAID

I said to her,
See, here is a tune I made up. Is it not nice?
And she said,
I made a poem once . . . . . .
I thought it was very nice.

◆

Wild . . wet . . women on the hill-tops
Great . . glad . . women of the sea
Sweet songs singing in the song-herds
Whispers a-whispering to me

◆

Gaunt . . grey . . women of the God-haunts
Tear women ploughing in the plain
Green gold gatherings of harvest
Quiverings a-breaking me in pain

◆

Quiet things a-lapping up the drear-time
Heart-breaks a-crowding in the pain
Silences hiding in the darkness—
Soft swift shadows in the rain

◆

White ones winging to the westward
Grey ones a-gathering of graves
Still-shod shadows out of twilight
Foam-drops heaving over waves

WHITE MIRRORS

Somewhere lie great white mirrors:
These, my white ones, are just and you cannot escape them.
Nowhere is one with a soul not reflected there.

And perhaps if you could gaze deep into the white Ones
Knowing not to whom the myriad souls belonged,
It might be you would call to that of the leper you had helped
to stone from the city
And leave your own lonely in the dark, and crying.

*

* *

There is no silence like to my silence
And there is no death like to mine.
Whither you go, I was there before you;
Whom you love I have already loved and forgiven.
When you speak, I have spoken it many times;
And your laugh I have laughed in unborn ages.

When I went, none knew of my going,
They thought it was only a leaf in the wind.
When I loved, none knew of my loving,
They thought it was only pain and a terrible sorrow.
When I spoke, none knew of my speaking,
They thought it was only night and a silence of quiet.
When I laughed, none knew of my laughing,
They thought it was only tears, and the burden of ages.

YOU ARE SO FOOLISH

You are so foolish—you—with all your little pains and aches
That you stare at this great Immensity looking out at you
. . . . quiet,
And think to defend yourself from it.
You cry out, and hide from it
(The wild look of a hunted thing is in your eyes)
You tear yourself fighting it.

And all the while it is looking, looking
Deep, into your heart
(The loving of it—why do you not die?)
Out beyond the furthest
And past the boundaries of the limitless.

And seeing you so well through its loving
It leaves you free
You look away from it . . . . . and are hurt
And it gazes . . . impassive . . . watching through all the
struggles and the deaths
And knowing that in the end, when you look . . . .
You will see clearer for the wounds
That the pain in your heart will make greater
The light in your eyes.

KISSES OF THE BENDING LILIES

The kisses of the bending lilies
The soul-song of the brook singing
The slow wearing away of rocks in the stream-bed by the everlasting waters
And the greeting of the rocks joyous to the wearing.

Hot damp air
Delicious

In my nostrils smell of clean wet earth
In my brain . . . Silence

My Spirit . . . to God.

Pale green-white leaves of things in rock-crevices
Crowded with rain-pearls.
Silent singing of green things
So silent . . . .
So singing . . . .
Nor only green things, but rocks and water also
And the swift call of birds joyous.

(The growing of things is terrible . . . immense . . .)

No sorrow or heart-break but would die of joy for this —— save it were blind ——
Tiny presence of Immensity . . . . . perfectly complete . . . . . but no boundaries . . . . . unseparated . . . . . no end no beginning (why should there be? I never asked you for an end or a beginning . . . it is so unnecessary) . . . . . and yet complete . . .
It is the all that I ask . . . . .

And Thou Lord hast lifted it to me!

I ACCEPT YOU

I accept you, (whoever, whatever you are—it makes
no difference)
I go with you on endless journeys
I pass with you thro endless dyings
I accept you, simply and naturally
And I believe you utterly.

I cannot lose you (whoever, whatever you are — it
makes no difference)
Perhaps you go (we must all go) but inevitably
you must return
And you cannot but stay with me forever.

I do not desire you.
I am not anxious lest you should not come to me
(And behold! thro the ages thou art running —
wings spread as eagles,
And casting away all arms I have caught thee in
eternal embrace!)

I do not fear you,
I am not anxious lest you should come to me
(And behold! Thou, my deliverer, running with
heart outspread
I know thee —— and THOU art my God!)

MOUNTAIN

You are dark and silent to-night, O my Mountain.
High moon watches and a hundred little loves of snows
twinkle out from your shadows,
From your hollow places.

You are very great to-night, my Mountain:
You are very high.

DEATH

—A Play—

Scene: A forest. Altar at the back. Moonlight from behind.

Clearing in front of altar.

Prelude is played (Debussy's L'Après-midi d'un Faune).

Music is continued and Death, who is young and very beautiful, dances until it stops. She goes over to a tree and arrays herself in a white sheet, which is lying at the foot.

DEATH

O Earth! Why wilt thou send me always these blind, who, in their fear, create for me this cruel covering?

Her face becomes hard and set as the Old Man enters, trembling with fear.

OLD MAN

Art thou Death?

DEATH

I am.

OLD MAN

O terrible as Night and Solitude! . . . . . Leave me!

He starts to run out, but returns as Death fixes her gaze upon him. She points to a tree and the Old Man hobbles to it and sinks down at its base. Death throws off her sheet and covers him with it, saying:

DEATH

Sleep on. I give thee back . . . . . thy thought.

She kneels at the altar. Music plays. Enter Galien, a child. She dances a while, then suddenly sees Death. She stops and, studying Death closely, advances slowly step by step, speaking at long intervals. Music plays in distance until the end.

GALIEN

Who art thou? . . . . Thou art very like someone I loved once, long ages past . . . and yet like another for whom I have been searching even longer.

(Death waits in silent suspense. Galien is touched by her distress.)

Tell me . . . .

DEATH

Thou dost not know me?

Galien falls into her arms, crying for joy.

GALIEN

My Mother! . . . . . God.

DEATH

I am Birth . . . . and Life . . . . in Death. And in all these . . . . . God.

They go out together. The Old Man wakes up and tries to shake off the sheet. He struggles with it, but is finally compelled to wrap it round him, as he cannot shake it off.

OLD MAN

It feels like lead . . . . .

(He looks around for Death, and then calls):

Death, Death!

(He waits. No answer.)

Perhaps it was a dream, after all. I shall go back and see.

But he does not go. He still waits instinctively for an answer.

DEATH (from within)

Go back . . . . . Love! And when thou hast loved enough, and canst love me,—Truth . . . . . return. I will not fail thee . . . . . ever! Only look within thyself.

Curtain

Early Poems

AROUND THE FIRE

When the dusk and twilight gather around,
And the sun has left the sky,
When the evening dew is upon the ground,
And I hear the whip-poor-wills cry;
We listen together without a sound
(My dearest Mother and I)
To some of the secrets the fire has found
In the pine-logs old and dry—
And sometimes in the dreams of a song I lie bound
And hear footsteps passing by.

THE SKY

O the evening sky is beautiful,
The evening sky is bright;
The evening sky doth break the day
And bring with it the night.

And when the darkness gathers o'er,
At my window I shall stay
To watch the stars come one by one
Out in the sky to play.

A WISH

I would love to live in the heart of a wood
With flowers and birds for friends;
To sleep at night on a bed of the moss
That Nature so carefully tends.

But Lord, since I cannot, I pray make my life
As happy as if I could;
Make the rush and the roar of the city
Like the song of birds in a wood.

SONG OF THE FISHERMAN'S CHILD

The roaring tide, the rushing wave—
Father, art thou in the sea-cave?
Or art thou in the fisher's boat?
Or is thy body on the waves to float?

Jesus in the heavens high,
Save my father ere he die!

Before you left the homelike shore,
To see your children never more;
Did you not see the grey storm-cloud?
Do you not hear me calling loud?

Jesus in the heavens high,
Save my father ere he die!

TO LILIES

Lilies of the Valley,
Lilies all so bright,
The name that best befits you
Is "Lilies of Delight."

Lilies tall and stately,
Lilies white and fair,
Lilies, there is nothing
That can with you compare.

GOD

Far from the busy roar of the town,
Far from the forest, dreary and brown,
Far from the mountain, grim and steep,
Alone on a rock rising out of the deep,
With none to care for my thoughts or me
Save only God . . . . . and the sea—

The wild waves break on the rocky shore,
  The dark clouds lower unheeded,
And all that troubled me before
Hath past away like a dream of yore
  At the word of the Ever-Needed.

God, art Thou not the earth and the sea,
  And the wind that I love so well?
Is it not Thy Spirit that kills my care?
Art Thou not in the rocks, the clouds, the air
  That with these I so love to dwell?

THE SNOW STORM

Fast the feathery flakes are falling,
Loud the icy wind is calling,
Blowing hither, blowing thither,
Hastening it knows not whither;
Hurling snow in wild delight,
Heaping drifts of spotless white
Softer than the softest down,
Glittering as a silver crown.

Fast the feathery flakes are falling
Loud the icy wind is calling;
Heaping snowdrifts without number,
Working while the world doth slumber.

CHARM: TO BE SAID BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP

I am drifting away from the realms of Thought,
Borne o'er the river by wind and tide
To the magic land on the other side—
Where the soft winds blow and the song of the sea
From a mental chaos sets me free—
For I was wearied with Thought.

TO M. H. L.

Loving sister of God's music makers
The birds—the thrushes and the meadowlarks;
Sister of the singing winds and zephyrs,
Sister of the clouds—the wings of heaven,
Sister of the strange shaped stars of winter—
Glistening living wonderflakes of winter,
Sister of the strange shaped leaves of autumn—
Softly colored, whispering leaves of autumn,
Sister of the trees with Life resounding,
Sister of the flowers of all the seasons,
Sister of the gold and silver sunsets—
Daughter of God art thou—and child of Nature,
O sister of the World of Beauty!

I WENT TO THE CHURCHYARD

I went to the churchyard on Sunday night,
  Away back there where the grey moons glow—
And I saw the church in the misty light,
  And I heard the people singing low.

I saw the moon in the cloudy skies,
  And I heard the night wind singing—
And I knew the meaning of wonderful eyes,
  And clouds . . . . . winging.

I knew the song of the whispering leaves,
  And I thought of a form once buried there;
I was caught in the net the silence weaves,
  And I drank with joy the sweet fresh air.

Then my loved one rose and came to me,
  And her soul communed with mine—
And out of her eyes I seemed to see
  God's glory shine.

I left the churchyard that starry night,
  Away back there where the grey moons glow;
And God was alone in the misty light—
  And I knew that it always had been so.

THE SONG OF THE CHILD

(From The Grey-Green Forest)

O River that leapest over the river-bed,
River that weepest over the river-bed,
That hast called me, and led me, and hidden, and fed me,
That hast taught me at last that thy hiding place is everywhere,
In the hidden and high places upon the earth;
(For there is a hidden place in every inch of ground,
And high places are in great abundance;)
Thou that hast lured me on with Love
In an unending search,
For though I have found thee, I must still search thee,
Thou that art gushing, and rushing, and hushing, and running,
and rippling, and singing,—
O take thou me at last!

THE STARS

Have you ever heard the stars sing?
They sing wonderful songs:
  Songs about common things,
  Everyday things,
  That you and I see and think nothing of!

Sometimes they sing about these common things
That we (presume to) know about:
And sometimes
About far away, misty things.

Have you ever heard the stars sing?
No?
Well, sometime, if you are listening,
If you are out in a garden with God,
At night . . . . . Perhaps you will hear,
Perhaps . . . . . the stars sing.

THE OCEAN'S LULLABY

O beautiful child of the human race,
With the haggard eyes that once were blue,
With the look of anguish on thy face
—Think not I am angry—know I am kind,
For the ocean loves thee e'en as the wind,
O woman with the beautiful eyes!

Then shut those beautiful eyes of thine,
Those haggard grey eyes that once were blue;
And thy face shall be washed by the waves and the dew—
And thou shalt wake in the arms of the dawn—
And the ocean that loved thee will be gone;
And the sun shall rise on another day
Better than that which has passed away.
And again thou shalt wake in the arms of the dawn
But the ocean that loved thee forever is gone.

EPILOGUE

Gathered together in this little book
Are all my poems; not worthy of a look;
But still I trust that you will treasure them,
Tho' not the flower, possibly the stem.
For who can write a perfect poem at once?
We all, at first, must play the part of dunce,—
The root and stem, from which the flower grows.
And more;—the stem adds somewhat to the rose.
For just imagine, Mother, in your mind
A rose without a stem,—an ugly kind!

Once more—I think you'll love them more for me
Than for themselves.
However that may be
The book is finished—all there is to see.

THE DIFFERENCE

—A Tale—

Once, in a far-off country, there lived a child who was different. He did not like the things that other children liked, and he did not know how to play. The village children tried to take him into their games; but he was so plainly unhappy, that they only wondered and let him go. By and by they forgot about him; but all the time he wondered why he was so different from the rest. Yet his wondering was all to no purpose, for neither he nor the children that were happy and played could ever understand the difference. Only he knew that in the depths of his soul, at night, something cried.

And as he grew older and was more with others, he began to love the companionship and try to understand. But he never knew them, save on the surface of life; for his language of deep things was different from theirs.

And now, when he was become a man, great flashes of insight came to him, yet when he tried to teach them to the people, none would listen to his words. And always he knew that it was because he was different; but neither he nor the others could ever understand the difference.

Night after night he spent in prayer that he might understand himself and throw off this curse of difference, so that the people would listen to his words, for sometimes it seemed to him that his heart would break when they turned from him and the visions he had to tell. And sometimes, when for a moment he stopped praying, that which had cried in the depths of his soul as a child was still heard crying; but then he would pray again until it became inaudible through the tumult of his praying.

One night after many years, it happened that his untold visions haunted him so that he could not pray, and in that time, when the voices of silence were singing, the crying in the depths of his soul was heard by God. And immediately there came to him One who understood all things, and to Whom there was no great and small. And His presence laid before the man's soul many things, so that he knew that to Him was nothing different, and that His dwelling-place was the heart of the people. And he saw that for this vision had the world been made, and that all things had had their beginning in this; and he understood that all he had suffered had been suffered from the beginning of ages by those he had most envied.

Then, with terrific force, he sent forth his vision, silent, to be burned into the souls of the multitude; and having accomplished that for which he had come into the world, he laid down his body with a song, passing out over the grave.

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